

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 773

SO 015 612

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TITLE American Surveys in Secondary Schools and Colleges.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Social Studies Association (Dallas, TX, March 23, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; Educational Needs; Females; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Introductory Courses; Material Development; Program Descriptions; Secondary Education; Sex Role; Social History; Student Reaction; Teacher Developed Materials; Teacher Education; Teacher Response; *United States History; *Womens Studies

ABSTRACT

Secondary and college level curriculum development projects that integrated women's history into American survey courses are described, and conclusions are drawn. The college level projects consisted of lecture outlines and bibliographies written and field tested by teachers and an annotated bibliography and six-week curriculum unit developed by teachers at a summer institute. The secondary level project comprised a summer institute in which teachers developed and then tested lesson plans. Field testing indicated that students had favorable reactions to the new materials and approaches. Although teachers who field tested the projects were enthusiastic, it was apparent that the most critical problem was the lack of training in social history and women's history. Further, although both secondary and college teachers reported that they want to add material on women to their American survey courses because they believe that integration changes students' views of the past, they differed about what they want from curriculum development projects. Secondary teachers suggested development of ready-to-use materials, including a new textbook and teacher's manual with background essays for teachers and students. In contrast, college teachers expressed a need for annotated bibliographies, but did not want to rethink their entire survey course or use a new text. (RM)

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AMERICAN SURVEYS
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
AND COLLEGES

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Presented at the Southwest Social Studies Association
annual meeting in Dallas, Texas, March 23, 1984.

SP 015 612

In American survey courses, our bread and butter history courses, we have the last chance to expose most students to a sense of our past and interest them in learning more. Before the 1970s almost all survey courses were largely administrative and political chronicles peppered with--presidents, generals and admirals--and filled with dates to memorize. During the 1970s and into the 1980s, historians have learned new techniques, gathered new material and new perspectives and have begun to teach the American survey in a different way. The dominant new focus of history has become social history including family, labor ethnic, urban, state, local and women's history.

It would be impossible to cover all the topics under the rubric of history in a brief paper. Therefore, I will focus on women's history and discuss my experiences over the past five years in a variety of both college and secondary school level projects to recast American survey courses and integrate material on women into them. After describing each program, I will draw some parallels and conclusions.

In 1979, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and I, received a grant through the Women's Committee of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) from the Department of Education, Fund For the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) to develop materials on how to integrate women's history into both the American and Western Civilization survey courses. More than a dozen veteran teachers were recruited

to help write these curriculum materials. We drew a stratified random sample of colleges and universities, small, large, public, private, with two, four year, and post-baccalaureate programs, where over three hundred and fifty teachers have now tested these materials. Two national conferences were held in Bloomington which brought together over one hundred teachers. These meetings were stimulating--participants seemed willing to share with others anything that had turned on their students.

A second grant from the Lilly Foundation made it possible to host a series of regional conferences and to revise and update the curriculum packets. Professor Martha Swain of Texas Women's University chaired the regional conference in this area. Some of the curriculum materials are now revised and can be purchased from the OAH for \$5.00. Others will be available soon. These materials consist of outlines of lectures and bibliographies with some overview lectures divided into four parts: U.S. Parts I & II; Western Civilization Parts I & II. I have brought a sample today from the U.S. Part II packet which I will pass around.

A second project was designed for the secondary school level and included an NEH grant to Indiana University to design a summer institute and to develop and test curriculum materials. Eighteen teachers from four Midwestern states came to Bloomington for a month. The schedule included daily lectures, field trips, and movies. Participants especially appreciated the opportunity to discuss with

Professor Joan Gunderson her co-authored textbook America: Changing Times in which she had attempted integration. Each summer institute participant prepared two 1 to 3 day lessons plans and then tested his or her own unit and at least one other teacher's unit during the 1982-1983 school year. We produced two curriculum packets which have now been expanded to include some introductory essays and have been revised after we received the evaluations back from those testing the materials. I have samples with me. You can order them for the cost of postage and handling.

I also have a third curriculum packet with me which was written by E. Jean Oppenheim, a participant in the NEH project. She was encouraged by her experience in the summer institute and signed up for a year-long special readings course with me. During this course she developed this this curriculum packet focusing on Nineteenth Century Literary Women. She would like to expand and revise this packet, so there is an evaluation form in each copy which we will ask teachers to fill out and return after they have tested her materials. Ms. Oppenheim has done a superb job researching the lives and writings of the women she included.

A third series of "mainstreaming" projects include a Woodrow Wilson/NEH funded summer institute for college teachers held at Princeton University that developed an annotated bibliography (available from the Woodrow Wilson Center) and an AHA/Sarah Lawrence six-week curriculum unit

on women history, available from the AHA. A project modelled on the OAH-FIPSE format is currently underway by the American Political Science Association for use in their American government survey course. A series of booklets, largely on Western Civilization topics, has been prepared by Marjorie Bingham of the St. Louis School System in Minnesota. Bingham's center acts as a clearinghouse for curriculum units developed for high school teachers.

The spate of projects suggests that students and teachers are interested in learning more about women's role in history. How serious is this interest?

The cardinal rule for students to take something seriously is for the teacher to announce that this material will be on the next exam. Students are shrewd observers and can recognize when a teacher is giving the token lecture on women for the semester. By and large both at the secondary and collegiate level students had favorable reactions to the new materials and approaches. Students liked the primary source materials that could be dittoed and passed out. They liked the individual and group projects suggested in most of the curriculum units such as role playing, arguing and debating. The mini-lectures for students in some of the units proved very helpful in providing necessary background to those students not familiar with women's history. Students liked the variety of materials including demographic graphs, readings, and puzzles. As one teacher reported, "In listing the

traditional homemaker role the students were unaware of the stereotypes presented as being beneficial for the male. They were surprised at the sexist quality of their thinking." Another added, "Most were amazed at the number of women who were [sports] champions.

One useful exercise the first day of class is to have students write down the five people whom they most admire in American history. Usually the overwhelming majority of those listed are white and male. When the students next skim through the textbook they discover that white males are the only heroes included. At the end of the year, the teacher should repeat the experiment. Teachers who have tried this experiment report that most students list at least one woman leader the second time.

The most common complaint of students is the lack of dates in social history. We usually discuss broad trends and talk the 18th century or the first half of the nineteenth century instead of 1763 or 1832. Students can get frustrated--what must they know for the tests?--so we must provide as much of an historical framework as possible.

"More, more, more" is the typical response of teachers who have tested some of the high school or college units. They find students are interested in social history so teachers are busy learning the material so that they can in turn present it to students. The most critical problem faced by most teachers is the lack of training in social history in general and women's history in particular. Those

who did their graduate work before the 1970s that is probably 75 percent of all current teachers (since few new teachers are hired and many are being rified) they gained no exposure to social or women's history. As a result outlines and bibliographies are helpful but not sufficient for many teachers who need a refresher course. We found that the teachers who attended the Indiana NEH summer institute for a month were much more able to use the curriculum materials than their interested colleagues.

What teachers say is their largest handicap is the lack of time to work up new units or to develop an entirely new course during the school year. Most teachers discovered that the exercises, background lectures, and readings took longer than expected. One teacher got around the problem by combining "the first two activities in one day's discussion." She found it, "very effective" for her students. By in large, secondary school teachers want lesson plans, questions for discussion and other exercises designed for them. While teaching a half dozen courses, they don't have time to go to a college library and look up bibliographic citations. Ideally they want a source book of key articles (most high school libraries do not contain the newer, more specialized journals in which many of these articles appear). They want a new textbook and teacher's manual with background essays designed for teachers as well as students. In contrast, college teachers want us to develop annotated bibliographies but do not want themselves

to rethink their entire survey courses nor use a new text. After all, it is tempting to keep using those trusted yellowing lecture notes.

Since adding material on women is so time-consuming, why do teachers bother? Those who do commonly answer that integration changes our view of the past. Including material on women adds a new dimension, an everyday-life-component to our courses that students can readily understand. Teaching the old style of history would mean a discussion of the 1970s would focus on Nixon, Ford and Carter and not discuss issues that seem central to most Americans on a daily basis. Students prefer a more balanced social, economic and political treatment of today's society; they have the same preferences for treating the past.

In sum, students and teachers can both profit from integrating material on women and social history into American survey courses. Integration is hard work, but it is now easier thanks to the efforts of dozens of committed teachers who have helped design curriculum materials. Most important, it is worth the time and effort. Even if students never take another history course beyond the U.S. survey, they will have a better sense of their rich past than ever before.